

Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program



Background

- The *Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program* was established following the signing of an international partnership agreement between UMass Lowell and Queen's University Belfast in March 2009.
- The objective is to enable students to gain a deeper understanding of the life of the Irish in Ireland before and after the Great Famine, and the role played by the Irish in the development of America during the 19th century.

Background

- In 1822 a group of 30 Irish labourers led by Hugh Cummiskey arrived in the new industrial town of Lowell to assist with the excavation of the Pawtucket and Merrimack canals. By 1831 their numbers had swelled to over 400 and Kirk Boott, mill manager, had donated a plot of company land for a Catholic church – St. Patrick's Church. This event marked the permanent settlement of the Irish in the town, with the area around the church becoming known as the "Irish Acre," the "Paddy Camps" or "New Dublin".
- The old church was constructed in what had been a shanty town, but the area was landscaped and changed when the old timber church was replaced in 1854 with a neo-Gothic stone church. From cartographic and pictorial evidence it would seem, however, that the area to the front of the church has remained unchanged since that time and remains in lawn. As such, it was decided that an archaeological excavation would be undertaken on the front lawn at St. Patrick's Church to see what – if anything – might survive.

Phase I

- Fieldwork began on August 15th with a week-long excavation in Lowell to investigate the site of an early 19th century Irish settlement at St. Patrick's Church.
- 6 UMass Lowell students worked alongside 3 Archaeologists from Queen's University excavating 2 trenches (2m x 2m) to investigate what evidence, if any, survives of the Irish camp.
- They looked for evidence of architecture and artefacts associated with the settlement.

Phase I - Results

The Dig Made Headlines:

- Pre-Famine Irish Settlements in Lowell, MA to be Excavated; *IrishCentral.com, August 8, 2010*

- Hoping to Unearth Irish History, They'll be Digging Again in Lowell; *The Boston Globe, August 10, 2010*

- Famine Irish Shantytown Will Yield its Secrets; *Irish Central.com, August 11, 2010*

- Lowell Dig to Unearth Secrets of Irish Settlers; *The Irish Emigrant (Boston Edition), August 16, 2010*

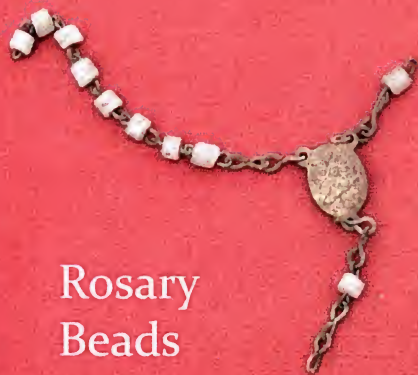
- Irish Heritage in Lowell: Excavation in Progress; *WBZ-TV News, August 17, 2010*

- Digging Up Roots; *The Lowell Sun, August 18, 2010*

- Irish Archaeologist Search for their Countrymen in Lowell; *WBUR (National Public Radio) Boston, August 20, 2010*



Phase I - Results



Rosary
Beads



Marbles

Although limited in scale and duration,
the reconnaissance excavation recovered
an assemblage of over 1,300 artifacts



Clay Tobacco Pipe

Glass from window



Glass from fruit jar



Phase II

- Fieldwork began on August 9th with a week-long follow up excavation at St. Patrick's Church in Lowell.
- 2 UMass Lowell students worked alongside 3 students and 2 Archaeologists from Queen's University .
- They excavated trench 1 from the reconnaissance excavation and a 2nd trench, trenches 3 to find attritional information to support their hypotheses based on the finds from Phase I.
- After a week of digging, they all made the journey to County Tyrone, Northern Ireland to the site of The Cummiskey Homestead for an additional week of excavation.
- Having identified the location of the Cummiskey homestead in the townland of Crossan in County Tyrone, the crew began what will be a full-scale topographic and building survey of the ruined building and its outhouses.
- They looked for evidence of architecture and artefacts associated with the settlement.

Phase II – Results (Lowell)



This foundation stone was found just as the dig came to a close last year. Cartographic evidence indicates that this trench is located over the southern side-wall of the a house noted on an 1850 map as the property of Fr. McDermott, former parish priest at St. Patrick's, purchased by him in 1847.



This was found in the area identified as a possible chimney by the ground penetrating radar. It is probably granite and has a semicircular indentation. That mystery item is still unknown. Hearth? Well-stone? Canal rubble? Further study is needed to identify it's purpose.

Phase II – Results (Northern Ireland)



- In 1817 Hugh Cummiskey left his home and came to Boston. We do not know if he came alone or with relatives. He walked out of this house knowing that he would never see his family or home again.
- Here it is almost 200 years later and we can find out more about this man the city of Lowell claims as one of its favored sons. The home is a great example of the typical Irish cottage. It is probably from the mid 1700s, stone held together by clay. Part of the house would have had the family cow, kept inside for protection and to possibly provide some warmth. The roof at the time would have been thatched. The house was lived in right up to the 1980s when fire did some damage to the building.
- Trench 2 was opened to explore the associated features with the original byre house. Archaeological finds on site were typical of a farmhouse of this period.

Phase III

- Fieldwork will begin on July 16th with a week-long follow up excavation at St. Patrick's Church in Lowell.
- 3 UMass Lowell students will work alongside Archaeologists from Queen's University .
- The team will conduct additional research both at the new trench they opened in Phase II (trench 3) and one of the original trenches from Phase I (trench 1).
- In addition to the excavation, the team will carry out analysis of the finds from Phases I & II.
- After a week of digging, they will travel to County Tyrone, Northern Ireland to the site of a second home associated with the Cummiskey family for an additional week of excavation.

What's the Impact of this Program?

- The *Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program* provides students with a unique opportunity to participate in a global program that will increase their understanding of a particular monument, the period in which it belongs, and their knowledge of the archaeology of the region in which it is set.
- We live in a global society and our students need to be global in their thinking.
- Launching partnerships such as the one this Program represents creates new bridges for global citizenship.
- Our partnership with Queen's University enables us and our students to go beyond what each university can do by itself and it will create a new generation of decision makers, entrepreneurs, and leaders who can compete and collaborate with the best in the world.

Get Involved

We are looking for sponsors for Phase III of the dig taking place in *August* 2012. If you are interested in supporting the program please consider one of the following options:

- **Platinum Level Sponsor - \$8,000**
 - Sponsor 3 students to participate in the excavation in Northern Ireland (flights, accommodation, transportation, meals etc)
 - Individual name or Company logo posted at excavation site
 - Name included in printed materials about the excavation
 - Engraved shovel used in the excavation
 - Invitation to post-excavation reception
 - Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program Jacket
- **Silver Level Sponsor - \$2,000**
 - Sponsor a student to participate in excavation in Northern Ireland (flights, accommodation, transportation, meals etc)
 - Individual name or Company logo posted at excavation site
 - Name included in printed materials about the excavation
 - Invitation to post-excavation reception
 - Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program T-shirt

Get Involved

- **Bronze Level Sponsor - \$1,000**
 - Excavation sponsor
 - Individual name or Company logo posted at excavation site
 - Name included in printed materials about the excavation
 - Invitation to post-excavation reception
- **Friend - \$500**
 - Name included in printed materials about the excavation
 - Invitation to post-excavation reception
- **Contributor - \$100**
 - Invitation to post-excavation reception

Additional Information

- For additional information about the *Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program* contact Dr. Frank Talty, Center for Irish Partnerships at UMass Lowell, francis_talty@uml.edu or Dr. Colm Donnelly, Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork at Queen's University Belfast, c.j.donnelly@qub.ac.uk
- From Crossan, County Tyrone to Lowell, Massachusetts, visit www.uml.edu/international/irish for updates on the *Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program*